

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BACKGROUND FOR SOLAR ENERGY POLICY REVIEW

REF: (A) STATE 145840; (B) GUATEMALA 3628

1. OWING TO THE IMPORTANCE OF DEPENDABLE ENERGY SOURCES TO NICARAGUA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTEREST SHOWN LOCALLY IN ENERGY MATTERS, EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT BRIEFLY ON CURRENT TREANDS IN THE APPLICABILITY OF SOLAR AND OTHER NON-TRADITIONAL SOURCES OF ENERGY IN NICARAGUA.

2. SOLAR ENERGY: -) NICARAGUANS ARE AWARE OF THE RECENT TECHNOLOGICAL AND PRODUCTIONS IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE SOLAR ENERGY FIELD IN THE U.S. AND ARE BEGINNING TO INVESTIGAGE THE FEASIBILITY OF APPLYING SOLAR ENERGY IN NICARAGUA. A LOCAL HOTEL OWNER IS INSTALLLING SOLAR PANELS TO BE USED IN THE HEATING OF HOT WATER FOR HIS NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED HOTEL. ANOTHER BUSINESSMAN HAS APPROACHED THE EMBASSY ABOUT LOCATING A U.S. JOINT VENTURE PARTNER FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF SOLAR HEATING PANELS IN NICARAGUA.

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B) FRANCIS DE WINTER, AN ICA-SPONSORED AMERICAN SPECIALIST SPEAKER, RECENTLY GAVE TWO SPEECHES IN MANAGUA ON SOLAR ENERGY -- "SOLAR ENERGY: PRESENT ACTIVITIES AND FUTURE POTENTIAL" AND "USE OF SOLAR ENERGY IN THE COOLING OF BUILDINGS". APPROXIMATELY EIGHTY PERSONS ATTENDED EACH LEACTURE AND APPEARED RECEPTIVE TO THE TOPIC. DE WINTER POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT NICARAGUAN ENGINEERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS MIGHT WISH TO AWAIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIMPLER TECHNOLOGY IN

SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT BEFORE SPENDING CONSIDERABLE SUMS ON THE SOHPISTICATED SYSTEMS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT NICARAGUA HAS A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR USING WOOD AND GEOTHERMAL SOURCES AS SUBSITTUTES FOR FOSSIL FUELS. HOWEVER, INDUSTRIES AND OTHER ENERGY USERS OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRILLY DEVELOPED AREA OF MANAGUA AND NICARAGUA'S PACIFIC COAST REGION, MAY BE ABLE,IN THE FUTURE, TO MAKE GREAT USE OF SOLAR ENERGY, HE ADDED.

4. WIND ENERGY: IN 1975 THE COMMERCIAL OFFICER ATTEMPTED TO PROMOTE THE USE OF WINDMILLS AS AN ENERGY PROVIDER IN NICARAGUA. HE WROTE TO VARIOUS U.S. FIRMS AND SOCIETIES TO OBTAIN INFORMATION CONCERNING FACILITIES AND SERVICES OFFERED AND PUBLICIZED THE AVAILABILITY OF THIS INFORMATION. ALTHOUGH NOT A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST WAS SHOWN BY THE INDUSTRIAL OR AGRICULTURAL SECTORS, STUDENTS AT THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY-ASSOCIATED CENTRAL AMERICAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (INCAE), DID MAKE VARIOUS INQUIRIES ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF USING WIND AS AN ENERGY SOURCE. THEY APPARENTLY USED THE WIND ENERGY ALTERNATIVE IN VARIOUS ACADEMIC EXERCISES DEALING WITH ENERGY UTILIZATION.

5. BAMBOO AS AN ENERGY FUEL: THE NATIONAL LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY (ENALUF) IS AMBITIOUSLY PURSUING THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN ELECTRICITY GENERATING PLANT POWERED BY THE BURING OF CANA BRAVA, A TYPE OF BAMBOO. THE 15 MW PLANT, WHOSE COST IS ESTIMATED AT US\$20 MILLION, WOULD BE LOCATED IN NICARAGUA'S EASTERN REGION WHERE SUITABLE LAND IS AVAILABLE AND AFFORDABLE.

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6. AGRICULTURAL WASTES AS AN ENERGY SOURCE: VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN USING AGRICULTURAL BY-PRODUCTS AS ENERGY SOURCES. A LARGE LOCAL EGG FARM IS SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATING THE USE OF METHANE FROM CHICKEN MANURE TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR ITS OPERATIONS. (THE EXCESS POWER WOULD BE SOLD TO A NEARBY TOWN.) A LOCAL SUGAR CANE OPERATION IS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITIES OF USING BIOMASS BY-PRODUCTS FOR ENERGY PRODUCTION AT ITS MILL AND REFINERY. IN ADDITION, VARIOUS RESEARCH GROUPS HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST.

7. EMBASSY SUPPORTS GENERAL SCOPE OF POLICY REVIEW AND IS PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN ASKED FOR COMMENTS.

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